

The Peter Cook House  
Denville Township, Morris County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-642

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14-DENV.V.  
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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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N.J.  
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The Peter Cook House  
Denville Township\*, Morris County, New Jersey

Owner: Charles A. Norris, Jr.

Date of Erection: (1) About 1778 and (2) 1806

Architect: Unknown

Builders: (1) Peter Cook (d. 1793) and (2) John P.  
Cook (1788-1864)

Present Condition: Original, with modern dormer  
windows and porches added

Number of Stories: One and one-half, with cellar

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - stone masonry

Exterior walls - stone masonry in older  
unit; timber frame clapboarded in later  
unit

Interior walls - stone party wall, plastered  
frame partitions

Chimneys - brick, built into inside of gable  
end walls

Roof - gable, wood shingled

Historical Data:

The identification of this unusual farmhouse  
has been made possible by search of the title back  
through successive owners to one Peter Cook as recorded  
in the public archives of the county.

By his will of 14 March 1793, proved 30  
December following, Peter Cook of Hanover Township,  
Morris County, ordered that his wife Mary and eldest  
son Peter continue "to live on my Plantation and to  
order and dispose of business and carry it on by the

\*Denville Twp. created 1913 from the southern part of  
Rockaway Twp., which had been formed 1844 from Pequannock  
Twp.

advise of my Executors to the Best Advantage of the support of and bringing up my children whom it is my will that they should have learning given them to read, write and sypher as far as their circumstances in Life should be Thought needful." Testator devised to his daughters Sarah and Mary each 25 Pounds current money of New Jersey when 18 years of age; and directed the remaining personal estate divided equally among his children, viz.: Caty, Sarah, Peter, Mary and John when the eldest son Peter arrived at 21 years. Lastly, he devised to his two sons Peter and John all his lands equally divided between them, with remainder to the survivor in case of the death of either under 21 years of age, and appointed his wife, Mary, son-in-law Abner Beach, Jr., and son Peter as executors.

By deed of 1st February 1802, Peter Cook of Hanover Township, with wife Experience, describing himself as son and one of the heirs of Peter Cook deceased, gave quitclaim to Maria Cook, one of the executors of said Peter Cook, for the tract of land bequeathed to him by the will above cited, the consideration money being 250 Pounds "equal to 625.00".

Having thus come into sole possession of the plantation, Mariah Cook "widow of Peter Cook", of Hanover Township, by her will of 29 December 1816, proved in 1831, devised to her son John P. Cook all her "part of the lands formerly belonging to my late husband Peter Cook" on condition he pay \$62.50 to my daughter Catherine Beach, to John Cook Havens son of my daughter Sarah Havens, deceased, and to my daughter Mary Stagg. To her son Peter Cook she devised \$15, and to the said two surviving daughters and grandson the residue of the personal estate equally divided, as also to her "granddaughter Mariah Cook, daughter of my son John Cook." Lastly, testatrix appointed her son John P. Cook and friend Nathaniel Havens as executors.

Maj. John P. Cook(a) died 24 April 1864, aged 76-1-8 according to inscription on the stone in the graveyard(b) on the homestead farm. He was devised half the lands by the will of his father Peter Cook as abovesaid and came into full possession of the homestead (here considered) by virtue of the quitclaim given by his elder brother Peter Cook and by the will of their mother Mariah Cook, both cited above.

By his will of 2 December 1862, proved 7 May 1864, this John P. Cook of Rockaway Township(c) devised to his son Stephen B. Cook the "homestead farm containing my dwelling house and other buildings, the land bounded as follows: Beginning at two chestnut trees on the north side of the old road leading

- (a) John P. Cook commissioned Major of Third or Northern Regiment, 2nd Battalion, of Morris County Militia, 15 November 1820. (History of Morris County, publ. by W. W. Munsell & Co., N.Y., 1882, p. 79).
- (b) Graveyard on the John P. Cook place, near where the Cook church stood, being the principal one for Denville (Ibid.) p. 348) John P. Cook was one of the three original trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Rockaway Valley incorporated under that title in 1810. The small building erected by the society soon after was known as "Cook's Church" in his honor as builder thereof on part of his land at the place known as "Cook's Corner", a mile below Denville, on the left side of the road to Beonten. By deed of 13 January 1825 widow Mariah Cook and John P. Cook (abovesaid) with his wife Mary, all of Hanover Township, conveyed to the Trustees of the M.E. Church in Rockaway Valley, in that Township, a quarter acre lot "whereon the meeting house of the said M.E. Church now stands, "on the east side of "the road from Joseph Scott's" at its intersection with the "old road leading from Parsippany and Rockaway", to hold the same as long as the lot continues to be occupied for a Meeting House lot by that denomination. The building was taken down in 1841 and moved to a lot in the village of Denville. (Ibid p. 345, and Morris County Deed Book Q2, p. 542).

(c) Rockaway Twp. created from Pequannock Twp. 1844

from where formerly stood the old Methodist Church to Parsippany, where a short cut for wagons and sleds and teams leads to my house; thence along the old road to the corner of the road leading to my house; thence along that road and the line of the Drayton farm to the Rockaway River; thence down the same to the southwest corner of a 20 acre lot bought of Wm. Hinchman; thence along the south line of said Hinchman to the road passing the dwelling of Mary Ann Mancel; thence crossing the road and along the south line of a tract bought by her from Stephen B. Cook about 15 chains to a small tree; thence by her line about 6 chains to her south corner "in the sprout land where her line turns an eastwardly course"; thence by a straight course to the said two chestnut trees, containing about 85 acres, and also the 20 acre lot "I got of my Father", subject to certain legacies to be paid by devisee.

By his wife Mary Fredericks(d) whom he survived, Major John P. Cook had a son Stephen B. Cook to whom he devised the homestead farm as above recited. This son with his wife Mary Ann, being of Doonton Township, gave deed on 15 December 1871 conveying to William C. Norris of same place for \$6500 the two tracts comprising some 106 acres as devised to him, with "all and singular the houses, buildings", etc., but excepting the burial ground lot of 100 by 200 feet, describing the farm as lying in Rockaway and Hanover Townships.

- (d) Gravestone inscribed "Mary Fredericks, wife of Maj. John P. Cook", d. 1 July 1862, aged 71-2-18 in Cook's graveyard. "John Cook and Polly Fredericks" were married 7 Aug. 1806 per records of the R.D. Church of Pompton Plains, publ. in Genealog. Mag. N.J. I, 41.

From Norris the farm passed to Oliver H. Palmer of New York City by deed of 24 January 1881 and was conveyed back to him on 9 June following. Norris then passed it to Marinda H. Norris of Rockaway Township for \$15,000 subject to mortgage of \$9500 on 14 June of same year. It was next sold by foreclosure against Marinda H. Norris and Roswell H. Rochester, executors of the estate of Oliver H. Palmer, deceased, to the Mutual Life Insurance Company, of New York, by deed of 28 May 1892. The last named conveyed it to Charles A. Norris of Boonton by deed of 31 December 1901, and he, by his will proved 5 July 1928, devised the same farm to his children, of whom Charles A. Norris Jr., is the owner at the time of our survey of the house in 1940.

Bibliography:

A search of title in Morris County Land and Probate records by James P. Richards, Jr., H.A.B.S. abstractor

*Lewis D. Cook*

Supervising Historian

Approved:

*Seymour Williams*

SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.  
District Officer

*not ref. for*